

## Message Text

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15

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SSO-00 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /158 W

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P R 040930Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5031

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

CFT SIX SEVEN

CINCUSNAVEUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE VALLETTA 2384

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MOPS, MT,UK

SUBJ: ISRAELI PATROL CRAFT

REF: VALLETTA 2383

1. SUMMARY: P.M. MINTOFF TABLED IN PARLIAMENT  
DEC 3 COPY OF ISRAELI MESSAGE REPORTED VALLETTA 2381,  
MADE STATEMENT INFORMING MALTESE PEOPLE OF INCIDENT,  
AD TABLED GOM MESSAGE TO GOLDA MEIR IN WHICH HE SAID  
GENEVA CONVENTION DOES NOT AUTHORIZE THIS "BARBARIC"  
BEHAVIOR AND THAT "UNLESS YOU WISH GOM TO SEVER DIP-  
LOMATIC RELATIONS, A MORE CREDIBLE ACCOUNT OF WHAT  
ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE ON NOV 29 AND 30 MUST BE FORTH-  
COMING". HE GAVE NO SPECIFIC DEADLINE.

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2. FOLLOWING IS FULL TEST OF GOM MESSAGE:

A. "THE MALTESE CABINET MET THIS AFTERNOON TO CONSIDER THE OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION RECEIVED FROM YOUR AMBASSADOR ABOUT THE ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO MALTESE TERRITORIAL WATERS OF THE TWO ISRAELI HEAVILY ARMED NAVAL VESSELS, THE MIZNAK AND THE KESHET, ON NOVEMBER 29 AND NOVEMBER 30, 1973.

B. "THE MALTESE MINISTERS FOUND NO EXPLANATION IN THE OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION WHY THE ISRAELI AUTHORITIES FAILED TO NOTIFY THE MALTESE GOVERNMENT OF THE ALLEGED 'FORCE MEJEUR,' AND THE NEED TO SEEK SHELTER IN MALTESE WATERS. THERE WAS NO DIFFICULTY FOR THE ISRAELI VESSELS TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR HEADQUARTERS IN ISRAEL. THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN EVEN LESS DIFFICULTY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MALTESE AUTHORITIES IF THEY HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY YOUR GOVERNMENT TO DO SO. AT NO TIME DURING OR BEFORE THEIR VIOLATION OF THE MALTESE TERRITORIAL WATERS WAS THERE ANY ATTEMPT BY YOUR GOVERNMENT OR THEIR ARMED VESSELS IN MALTA TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE MALTESE AUTHORITIES. THE GENEVA CONVENTION DOES NOT AUTHORIZE THIS BARBARIC BEHAVIOUR.

C. "THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ARE ALREADY AWARE OF THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA ARE LOOKING UPON THESE PRIMA FACIE HOSTILE ACTS.

D. "ABOVE ALL, IT IS NOT UNDERSTOOD WHY THE ISRAELI NAVAL VESSELS, WHEN ORDERED TO PROCEED TO THE SHELTER OF THE GRAND HARBOUR, INSTEAD OF COMPLYING WITH THIS LEGITIMATE REQUEST, IMMEDIATELY TOOK FLIGHT.

E. "UNLESS YOU WANT AND YOU WISH (SIC) THE GOVERNMENT OF MALTA TO SEVER DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, A MORE CREDIBLE ACCOUNT OF WHAT ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE ON NOVEMBER 29 AND NOVEMBER 30, 1973 MUST BE FORTHCOMING.

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3. DURING DEBATE THAT FOLLOWED, NATIONALIST LEADER BORG OLIVIER SAID OPPOSITION HOPED INFORMATION REQUESTED WOULD BE FORTHCOMING, BUT THAT GOOD RELATIONS WOULD BE MAINTAINED. ONE SHOULD THINK TWICE ABOUT IT AND NOT BE RASH IN BREAKING RELATIONS.

4. MINTOFF RESPONDED THAT HE HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH

ISRAELIS SINCE NOV 30 AND THEY HAD BEEN GIVEN EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN. THEY MADE CONFLICTING STATEMENTS, AT FIRST EVEN DENYING THE EXISTENCE OF GUNBOATS OF THAT NAME. THE GUNBOATS WERE IN MALTESE WATERS FROM ABOUT 3:00 P.M. NOV 29 UNTIL 1:30 P.M. NOVEMBER 30 AND ISRAELIS HAD NEVER COMMUNICATED WITH GOM. THIS COULD NOT BE TOLERATED. MALTA WAS NO LONGER "THE FOREIGNERS' LATRINE" (A TYPICAL MINTOFF COMMENT ON SIXTH FLEET VISITS FAMILIAR FROM EARLIER DAYS). GOM HAD WAITED THREE DAYS FOR AN EXPLANATION, AND UNLESS ONE WAS RECEIVED IT WOULD NOT THINK TWICE ABOUT BREAKING RELATIONS.

5. B.O. CONTINUED TO URGE MODERATE, BUT MINTOFF REMAINED ADAMANT, SAYING ISRAELI GUNBOATS WERE ARMED TO THE TEETH WITH MISSILES, TORPEDOES, DEPTH CHARGES AND 35 MILLIMETER GUNS. "MALTA HAS NO NAVAL FORCES (SIC) BUT IF WE HAD, I WOULD HAVE ORDERED INTERCEPTION." MALTA WAS NOT AFRAID OF ISRAEL OR ANYBODY ELSE, AND HAD IT BEEN SOMEBODY ELSE (PRESUMABLY USSR), THE OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE SPOKEN DIFFERENTLY.

6. COMMENT: MINTOFF OBVIOUSLY IS PLAYING THIS ONE TO THE HILT. HE DOES HAVE A CASE IN THAT ISRAELI DID NOT INFORM GOM THAT ITS SHIPS SEEKING SAFE HAVEN, AND THAT ISRAELI MESSAGE DOES NOT ACCOUNT FOR THEIR PRESENCE IN MALTESE WATERS EARLIER THAN THE MORNING OF NOV 30. HIS COMMENT ON THEIR DENIAL OF EXISTENCE OF VESSELS HOWEVER, IS UNFAIR INTERPRETATION OF ISRAELI AMBASSADOR'S PLEA OF IGNORANCE WHEN FIRST CONTACTED. IT IS LIKELY THAT MINTOFF'S ACTIONS REFLECT WHAT HE BELIEVES TO BE LEGITIMATE ANGER, BUT A DESIRE TO PLEASE LIBYA AND OTHER ARABS BY BREAKING RELATIONS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH ISRAELI, AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SITUATION FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. GETZ

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** TERRITORIAL WATERS, DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS INTERRUPTION, NAVAL SHIPS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 04 DEC 1973  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1973VALLET02384  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** n/a  
**From:** VALLETTA  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1973/newtext/t19731245/aaaabgzq.tel  
**Line Count:** 157  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE  
**Office:** ACTION EUR  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** VALLETTA 2383  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 20 SEP 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <20-Sep-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <26-Nov-2001 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ISRAELI PATROL CRAFT  
**TAGS:** MOPS, MT, UK, IS  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005